

Birds still control beach

Officials expect chicks to fly by next week

By Charles Mathewson
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PLYMOUTH — As good weather returned, more people wish the piping plovers which have closed Plymouth Beach to vehicles would go away. Beach managers expect most of the plover chicks hatched in six nests on the outer beach will be able to fly away by July 17.

"By Wednesday of next week, two-thirds of the beach should open," town manager Don Jacobs told selectmen Tuesday night.

Some residents still question the need to close the beach to protect the birds. The federal endangered species act makes it a crime to harm them and the town would be liable to fines if a bird dies through negligence. To protect itself, the town has agreed to follow state and federal guidelines which place a 300-foot diameter buffer zone around the nests. One nest lies so close to the crossover, the buffer zone effectively closes the beach to vehicles.

"These birds are not endangered, they're threatened," Richard Diozi told selectmen.



File photo

Brian Alosi — Selectman says town should consider beach sticker rebates.

"This just seems to be an attempt by the Audubon Society to close the beach. It is time to re-evaluate why we have given this beach away."

Diozi charged the nest which closed the beach last year was placed near the crossover by human hands. Federal law prohibits moving nests — translocation — without permission and no one has applied for permission to move nests on Plymouth Beach.

"I'm a bird lover and I can't find a cardinal in my driveway," Diozi said. "Someone's put it

SPOTLIGHT

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there." He has photographs of the nest showing a mound of sand around it. He claims humans, not the tiny birds, made the mound, then put the nest on it.

"If anybody has translocated a nest," warned selectman Eugene Lane, "they have seriously jeopardized their employment with the Town of Plymouth."

Diozi did not indicate who he supposes may have moved the nest.

Plover hens build a nest like most shore birds — they make a saucer shaped depression in the sand and lay their eggs. There's

no nest to move, except the eggs.

"If we could move them out of harm's way that would solve the ORV (Off Road Vehicles) problem," said beach conservation officer John Crane. "We certainly wouldn't move them into harm's way. It's a violation of state and federal law to touch them and it just wouldn't work."

It costs \$40 to buy a four-wheel-drive vehicle beach sticker.

"We should consider a rebate for stickers," said selectman Brian Alosi. "To me it just seems a matter of fairness."

On the suggestion of chairman Linda Teagan, the board won't consider the idea until management staff can work out how or whether the town can give rebates. In the initial opinion of assistant town manager Eleanor Beth and finance director Michael Daley, town meeting would have to vote to appropriate money for a rebate. Tax collector Edward Borgatti estimates his office has sold 1,800 beach stickers at \$40 each. He says the number has not declined over the last two years the beach has had temporary closings.

"People seem to understand and accept it," Borgatti said. "It doesn't seem to be deterring people. We tell them the beach is still closed and they ask when it will open. I tell them the birds aren't communicating that to us."